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CALEB STONE'S DEATH WATCH

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"Caleb Stone's Death Watch"

CALEB STONE'S DEATH WATCH

A PLAY

BY

MARTIN FLAVIN

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"Caleb Stone's Death Watch" was presented by the Alliance Players of Jersey City in the National Little Theatre Tournament of 1924 at the Belasco Theatre, where their presentation won one of the three prizes.

The cast was as follows:

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FEB 8 1927

CALEB STONE ..... *John Bruns*
HIS NURSE ..... *Mabel Hisor*
CARRIE, *his sister* ..... *Viola Bley*
ANTOINETTE, *his daughter* ..... *Edith Finkeldey*
HENRY, *his daughter's husband* ..... *John Ehrhardt*
TONY, *his granddaughter* ..... *Helen Choffy*
TOM, *his son* ..... *Alan Stark*
HIS DOCTOR ..... *Harry Dippel*
FRED ..... *Walter Dippel*
JIM ..... *Charles Wessling*

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For this production a very simple but effective setting was used. A black velvet cyclorama described the three walls of the room. At center back there was a large four-poster bed with canopy. To the right of the bed and at the head of it was a small bed table with a telephone on it. To the right and left of the bed, also at the head of it, were two floor lamps with single bulbs covered by narrow cylindrical shades. These lamps must not shed a very intense light. Halfway down stage and to the right was a chair; down stage a little more to the right was another chair. Both of these chairs faced on stage. This same arrangement of chairs was carried out on the left side of the stage. These chairs were high-backed Italian Renaissance armchairs. There was only one other piece of furniture in the room and that was a hassock which stood below the foot of the bed and at its left corner. The scene of the two spirits was played before a black gauze drop which was lowered as all lights went out on the speech of the Doctor, "Nothing, madam, except as I have said, a miracle." On the exit of the two spirits the lights were again lowered, and when they were brought up, the gauze curtain had been taken away and we saw the original room again. The play affords a fine opportunity for ingenuity in lighting, but can be effectively produced with very meagre resources.

WALTER HARTWIG, *General Manager*
National Little Theatre Tournament.

THE CHARACTERS

CALEB STONE
HIS NURSE
HIS SISTER, CARRIE
HIS DAUGHTER, ANTOINETTE
HIS DAUGHTER'S HUSBAND, HENRY
HIS GRANDDAUGHTER, TONY
HIS SON, TOM
HIS DOCTOR
FRED
JIM

CALEB STONE'S DEATH WATCH

SCENE: CALEB STONE *is dying invisibly in a huge 17th Century bed. The head of the bed, which is against the center of the back wall, supports a magnificent tester with heavy curtains looped back just enough to shield the invalid's eyes from the night lamps on stands at either side. Just beyond the left hand stand is a door. On the opposite side of the bed a uniformed nurse, young and pretty, sits close to the light in an easy chair, reading a novel. Doubtless there are other doors and windows too, and many pieces of fine heavy furniture, but so cunningly are those bedside lights devised that, save for a narrow space in front of them reaching only a little further than the foot of the bed, the room is in impenetrable darkness.*

Somewhere in the room a clock with a quick, cheerful little chime strikes twelve. The nurse yawns, closes her book, looks at her wrist watch, goes to the bedside and looks at the patient, then bends over him and looks long and closely; and now suddenly awaking to quick and energetic action, presses a push button on the wall and starts quickly around the foot of the bed to the door. Before she reaches it there is a muffled knock. She opens it and speaks to a servant in the hall.

NURSE. Please call the family. Just say to them that Mr. Stone does not seem quite so well. *(She closes the door, retraces her steps, looks again at the patient, and takes up a telephone from the night stand.)* Gramercy, four, one, two, two.—Right. *(A pause. She rings again.)* Ring them again, please. *(A pause.)* Doctor?—This is Mr. Stone's nurse.—Yes, sir. I'm sorry to disturb you at this hour, but Mr. Stone does not seem so well tonight. —Yes.—Yes.—Yes.—I have already done that.—Yes, sir.—Very good. Good-bye. *(She hangs up the receiver and stands beside the bed, watching the patient.)*

(His sister, MISS CARRIE STONE, *a little wizened old woman as sharp faced and dour as* CALEB *himself, muffled in a hideous flannel dressing-gown with her scant gray hair in a mad disarray of patent curlers, slips quietly into the room.)*

CARRIE. *(In a hissing whisper)* Is he worse?

NURSE. He does not seem quite so well tonight, Miss Stone.

CARRIE. Oh! *(This is an habitual exclamation with* CARRIE. *It follows the answer to almost any question and seems to imply a constitutional distrust and suspicion.)* Have you sent for the doctor?

NURSE. Yes, I have. He is coming right over.

CARRIE. Oh! *(She goes to the bedside, pushes back the curtain and examines* CALEB *critically.)* He don't look no different.

NURSE. *(Non-committally)* No?

CARRIE. I don't think we'd ought to wake him up. He never liked to be waked up.

NURSE. I think there is no danger of disturbing him. He is in a state of coma.

CARRIE. A state of what?

NURSE. Coma.

CARRIE. Oh! He never was that way before. *(She stares at the nurse, then leans over the bed and hisses)* Caleb! *(She sighs almost with a note of relief.)* Well, I guess he is unconscious. *(She gets a straight-backed chair out of the darkness near at hand and sits down, rigidly erect, with folded hands, by the head of the bed. The* NURSE *busies herself about the table on the opposite side. A few moments pass.)*

(And now the door opens softly again. This time to admit the sick man's daughter, ANTOINETTE, *who, followed by* HENRY, *her husband, tiptoes into the room.* ANTOINETTE *is a large woman with the overbearing Stone manner and the disagreeable Stone voice. She wears a hastily donned negligee and a boudoir cap from which her blonde hair is messily escaping.* HENRY *is fat, sleek, bald and lazy-looking. He wears a very decorative bathrobe over his pajamas, and seems not more than half awake.* ANTOINETTE, *observing that her aunt is established in the choice bedside position, glares savagely at* CARRIE, *who hitches her chair against the bed rail and glares back at her. Thus clearly deprived of her rights,* ANTOINETTE *swishes her way around the bed and seats herself in the nurse's chair. She pulls back the curtain and bends over the bed.)*

ANTOINETTE. *(In a Barrymoresque tone which she considers suited to the occasion)* Father. *(A pause.)* Dear Father!

CARRIE. *(Cheerfully)* He can't hear you; he's unconscious.

ANTOINETTE. *(Horrified)* Unconscious? Father is unconscious? *(Imperiously)* Nurse! Nurse! Is Mr. Stone unconscious?

NURSE. I am sorry to say he is. (HENRY *sighs*

in a manner that suggests relief and then tries rather vainly to turn it off into a yawn.)

ANTOINETTE. *(Glaring at him)* Henry, do you hear? Father is unconscious.

HENRY. *(Meekly)* Yes, my dear. *(He hesitates, wondering just what is expected of him.)* Um —er—dreadful, isn't it? (CARRIE *sniffs disdainfully. This is another of* CARRIE'S *habits which she indulges on the slightest provocation. It consists in wrinkling her nose and inhaling three or four times staccato, and it indicates extreme and derisive disapproval.)*

ANTOINETTE. Where is the doctor? Why isn't he here?

NURSE. He is on the way now.

ANTOINETTE. Well, he should be here. He should have been here long ago. *(She leans back in her chair. Querulously)* Henry, why don't you get a chair and sit down?

HENRY. *(Shifting his weight from one foot to the other)* I'm quite comfortable, my dear.

ANTOINETTE. For pity sake, don't argue with me. It makes me nervous to see you fidgeting. Get a chair and sit down.

HENRY. Yes, my dear. *(He gets a chair out of the darkness and sits down near the foot of the bed, and after a few moments dozes.)*

CARRIE. *(After a pause. Tartly)* Where's Tony?

ANTOINETTE. She'll be here in a minute. Poor child, she was so tired tonight I hardly had the heart to wake her.

CARRIE. Oh!—'Tain't often she's home this early.

ANTOINETTE. *(Hurt and indignant)* Why, Carrie Stone, what do you mean by that? (CARRIE *sniffs.)* The child's hardly been out of the house since father was taken ill. I really don't know what you mean. It's most annoying of you.

CARRIE. I know when the front door opens and I know when it shuts. I'm a light sleeper, Antoinette—to my grief.

ANTOINETTE. *(Whimpering)* You ought to be ashamed to fuss at me with poor father in this condition. You really ought.

CARRIE. Well, if you want her to run wild day and night, it's your own business. 'Twouldn't be my way of raising children, but——

ANTOINETTE. *(Dabbing at her eyes)* It's very cruel of you, Carrie—very cruel.

CARRIE. Oh!—Well 'tain't nothing to me one way or the other.

(The door opens and TONY *comes in.* TONY *is an utterly seductive little flapper with the latest things in walks and talks and poses and manners; and the dernier cri in pink silk negligees and caps. Her cute little face wears an expression of annoyance, and she is, as she appears to be, greatly and frankly bored.)*

ANTOINETTE. My dear child, whatever kept you so long?

TONY. *(Snappishly)* Well, you told me to take off my dress and put on a negligee, didn't you?

ANTOINETTE. *(Quickly, but not quickly enough)* Hush, Tony! Your dear grandfather—— *(She sobs noisily in hope of avoiding retribution.)*

CARRIE. *(Sniffing vigorously)* Oh!—I might have known that was the way of it.

TONY. *(Lounging against the bed. Sweetly)* What's put your teeth on edge, Aunt Carrie?

CARRIE. Your mother was just telling me that you were so tired tonight she just couldn't bear to wake you up.

ANTOINETTE. *(Outraged)* Carrie! *(To* HEN-

RY) Henry! Do you hear the way that Carrie is talking to me?

HENRY. *(Roused from his nap)* Eh? What?—What's that, my dear?

ANTOINETTE. Carrie has been insulting to me, positively insulting. I won't bear it.

HENRY. *(Helplessly)* Dear me! Now that's too bad. Really, I——

ANTOINETTE. *(Hysterically)* She's got to stop it. I simply won't endure it. You can tell her that, Henry. *(Muttering furiously)* Right in front of my own child—the very idea—I was never so mortified——

HENRY. Yes, my dear, of course. *(He clears his throat. Feebly)* I say, Carrie. You shouldn't do it—er—you really shouldn't.

CARRIE. Shouldn't do what?

HENRY. Why—er—you shouldn't devil Antoinette, and—and—er—make her cry, and all that.

CARRIE. And what call had she to lie to me? Just answer me that.

HENRY. *(Desperately)* I don't know anything about it, but you shouldn't do it, Carrie. I simply can't permit it.

CARRIE. *(Furious)* Oh!—Is that so? Well, you just listen to me, Henry: No lazy, good-for-nothing fortune-hunter can come into this family and give me orders. And don't you forget it! *(She sniffs violently.)*

ANTOINETTE. *(Outraged)* Oh!

HENRY. *(With a sickly smile, in a sickly voice)* You're positively vulgar.

TONY. *(Earnestly)* I wish Grandfather could hear you. He'd shut your mouths in a hurry—all of 'em.

ANTOINETTE. *(Shocked)* Tony!

(There is a long, dead silence. It is possible that

they are reflecting on just what Grandfather would say and do. The NURSE *goes to the bed and looks at the patient.)*

ANTOINETTE. *(In a sepulchral whisper)* Is there any change?

NURSE. No, I think not. *(She adds cheerfully)* He is not suffering, you know.

CARRIE. *(Leaning forward eagerly)* How's that? What say?

ANTOINETTE. *(Whispering hoarsely)* She says there is no change in the condition, and that he is not suffering.

CARRIE. Oh! *(She looks suspiciously at the* NURSE.)

ANTOINETTE. Dear me, I can't think what could be keeping the doctor! Don't you think you should call him again, Nurse?

NURSE. It's only a few minutes since I spoke with him, and he said he would come immediately. I'm sure he hasn't had time to get here yet.

ANTOINETTE. You think not? It seems a perfect age since Peters called me. Oh, dear, it's most trying. *(To* TONY) Tony, my child, do get a chair and sit down.

TONY. *(Sitting on the edge of the bed)* I'm all right here.

ANTOINETTE. Do as I say. You make me wildly nervous fidgeting there; and besides, it isn't respectful or appropriate.

TONY. Oh, very well! *(She gets a chair out of the darkness and sits down at the foot of the bed, across from her father.)*

CARRIE. Why isn't Tom here?

ANTOINETTE. I'm sure I don't know.

CARRIE. Well, if you ask me, he ought to be here. It's the least he could do.

ANTOINETTE. Henry!

HENRY. *(Rousing with difficulty)* Yes, my dear.

ANTOINETTE. Where is Tom?

HENRY. *(Vaguely)* Tom?—Oh, yes, of course, my dear, to be sure. I—er—I think Peters said he hadn't come in yet.

ANTOINETTE. I never heard of such a thing. It's simply disgraceful. The idea of his being out when his father is in this condition!

CARRIE. *(Sniffing)* It's no more than I'd expect. He's never shown consideration for any living thing since the day he was born.

TONY. *(Disgustedly)* Aw, why pick on Tom?

ANTOINETTE. Hush, my child! You're too young to understand these things. *(To* HENRY) Do you know where he is, Henry?

HENRY. No, my dear, I haven't the most remote idea. We're not on—er—very friendly terms, you know. Peters said he might be at the Club and he'd call him there.

CARRIE. Oh!—at the Club! *(She sniffs viciously.)*

TONY. Well, suppose he is at the Club, what of it?

ANTOINETTE. *(Warningly)* Tony!

TONY. Well, why shouldn't he be at the Club? Why would any sane person stick around this place if they didn't have to?

ANTOINETTE. Tony! Have you no realization of your grandfather's condition?

TONY. *(Mumbling)* It's the truth, anyway.

ANTOINETTE. I'm amazed at you.

CARRIE. *(Communing with herself)* I'm not. It's just what I'd expect.

ANTOINETTE. Henry!

HENRY. Yes, my dear.

ANTOINETTE. I wish you'd speak to Tony.

HENRY. Why, certainly, my dear. *(Vaguely)* Tony!

TONY. *(Impudently)* What?
HENRY. Er—don't annoy your mother.
TONY. I'm not annoying her.
HENRY. *(Fretfully)* Well, don't do it again.

(TONY *grumbles unintelligibly;* CARRIE *sniffs. There is a long silence. The door is opened noisily and his son,* TOM, *a man in the forties, puffy, red-faced, slightly the worse for liquor, rough of speech, coarse of manner, wearing a dinner jacket over a crumpled shirt, walks heavily into the room.)*

TOM. *(Nodding carelessly to the nurse and ignoring the others)* What's the matter—anything wrong?
NURSE. *(She seems to look on* TOM *with more favor than the others)* Your father does not seem quite so well tonight, Mr. Stone.
TOM. Hm—yes—Peters told me that over the 'phone. *(He hesitates awkwardly.)* I—er—I came right over. (CARRIE *sniffs. He glances at her with careless irritation.)* Hello, Carrie! Dinner disagree with you? (CARRIE *sniffs again and snaps her jaws. He looks away from her to the figure on the bed, and the tone of his voice is more respectful.)* How you feeling, Guv'nor?
CARRIE. He's unconscious.
TOM. *(Impressed)* Unconscious? That right? *(He looks at the nurse for confirmation. She nods her head.)* You don't say?—H'm.—Bad as all that, eh? *(He sits down heavily on the end of the bed.* ANTOINETTE *is dabbing at her eyes.* HENRY *is dozing. He looks at them and looks away, bored and depressed. His eye lights on* TONY *and brightens.)* Hello, Tony! Where'd they find you this early?
TONY. *(Shaking her head warningly)* Nix. Nix.
TOM. Huh? What?

TONY. Cut it! I'm in bad with the family.

TOM. *(Looking from one to the other of his relatives with good-natured contempt)* Oh, well, I wouldn't let that worry me! *(He observes her costume with growing appreciation.)* Say, that's some outfit you've got on. Do you know—in that rig you're a dead ringer for that girl, Fanny—Fanny, what's her name—the one that's dancing on the Midnight Roof?

ANTOINETTE. *(Outraged)* Tom Stone!

TOM. *(Startled)* Eh? What?

ANTOINETTE. Have you no sense of decency at all?

TOM. Now what's the matter with you?

ANTOINETTE. *(Working toward a mild hysteria)* If you have no more respect for your poor father than to talk about such things when he lies here on his death bed, you might at least spare the rest of us. It's shocking and disgusting.

TOM. Oh, rats!

ANTOINETTE. And to put such ideas in a young girl's head! You ought to be ashamed of yourself. I forbid it, do you hear, Tom Stone? I forbid any such remarks in my daughter's presence.

CARRIE. If she didn't wear that kind of clothes, she wouldn't lay herself open to that kind of comparison.

TOM. *(Wearily)* Aw, dry up, Carrie! *(He turns with more fire to* ANTOINETTE) You know me, Antoinette. I do what I please and I say what I please, and if I think Tony looks like a chorus girl and I want to tell her so, that's my business.

ANTOINETTE. Tom Stone! How dare you? *(She appeals weepily to* HENRY) Henry! Henry!

HENRY. *(Awake but apprehensive)* Yes, my dear.

ANTOINETTE. Do you hear how Tom has been talking to me?

HENRY. *(Dodging plaintively)* Oh, I say now—er——

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ANTOINETTE. Did you hear what he said to me?

HENRY. No—er—that is, yes, my dear—part of it.

ANTOINETTE. And are you going to permit any man to speak to your wife in that fashion?

HENRY. *(Hastily)* No, of course, my dear—er—certainly not. *(To* TOM *without enthusiasm)* Now, I say—look here, Tom——

TOM. *(Interrupting roughly)* I don't want any of your lip.

HENRY. *(Subsiding weakly)* Oh, I say, let's not get into a wrangle. It's—it's such rotten taste.

TONY. *(Fervently)* I just wish Grandfather could hear you—all of you. *(There is a dead silence.)*

(The door opens and the Doctor comes into the room. He is an elderly man with a brusque manner and a gruff voice. He nods briefly to the company, walks briskly around the bed, converses in an undertone with the nurse, sits on the edge of the bed and studies the patient, then stands up and addresses the company in general in a kindly but quite professional tone.)

DOCTOR. I'm sorry to say I'm afraid there is nothing more that can be done.

ANTOINETTE. Oh, Doctor, you don't mean—— *(She sobs into her handkerchief.* CARRIE *snuffles.* HENRY *mumbles and twists uneasily in his chair.* TOM *stands awkwardly and shoves his hands in his trouser pockets. Even* TONY *is impressed.)*

HENRY. But I say, Doctor! Really, is there no chance at all?

DOCTOR. There is always a chance, the chance of a miracle. Nothing else can save him. *(There is a*

faint sigh which seems to proceed from the mourners as a whole, and which is vaguely suggestive of relief.)

TOM. *(Much subdued)* Do—do you think he may go soon?

DOCTOR. Yes, very soon. I think it is now only a matter of minutes.

TOM. Good Lord! *(He sits down limply on the foot of the bed.)*

CARRIE. Will he be conscious again, Doctor?

DOCTOR. No, it is unlikely. As a rule, this state of coma continues to the end.

CARRIE. Oh!—— *(She pulls back the curtain a little and looks at* CALEB.*)*

(The DOCTOR *gets a chair out of the darkness and sits down close beside the bed. The* NURSE *stands attentively at his side.* ANTOINETTE *is sobbing brokenly.* HENRY, *wide awake and bolt upright, presents a respectfully appropriate appearance. Even* TONY *has pulled her chair a little closer to the bed and is weeping decently.)*

ANTOINETTE. Oh, is there nothing, Doctor?—Nothing?

DOCTOR. Nothing, madam, except, as I have said—a miracle.

(And now of a sudden those cunning bedside lights are dark, and the bed itself and all its pleasant company vanished straightway from sight.

(At this very instant, behold, appearing marvellously out of nowhere, two of the strangest little figures with ruddy, cheerful little faces and gold-rimmed specs, and thin gray hair neatly parted in the middle. They wear baggy black trousers and black vests and old-fashioned roll collars with little black bow ties. They are coatless and

their white shirt sleeves are covered to the elbow with black sleeve protectors. Each carries a pen-holder behind his ear. A little circle of pale light surrounds and reveals them. They are strolling, arm in arm, conversing amiably. Suddenly they halt at sight of something invisible to us.)

FRED. Hello, what's this?

JIM. *(Carelessly)* Death bed, of course. Don't you see, there's the doctor and the nurse and all the mourners?

FRED. Why, yes, that's plain enough. But where's the death watch?

JIM. By George, that's right! I never thought of that. *(He looks up and down and all around.)* There isn't a soul in sight.

FRED. *(Much impressed)* I've heard of these things, but I've never seen it happen before.

JIM. *(Still peering vaguely about)* It beats me.

FRED. They tell a story down my way about a fellow that came over and there was no one waiting for him but a dog, but I never took much stock in it.

JIM. Well, there ain't even a dog around here.

FRED. *(Solemnly)* No, sir; you're right, Jim, there ain't.

JIM. Do you suppose we could be mistaken?

FRED. *(Studying the invisible scene)* I don't see how we could.

JIM. Let's take a look at him.

FRED. Let's. *(So they move a little closer to the invisible object on the invisible bed, and, having looked, recoil abruptly with exclamations of amazement.)*

JIM. Why, doggone my buttons, it can't be!

FRED. Goshamighty, did you see what I saw?

JIM. Caleb Stone!

FRED. I couldn't believe my eyes. Of all the gosh-blamed things!

JIM. The mean old sun of a gun! Just to think of it: ain't it rich?

FRED. *(Beginning to chuckle)* Rich? It's the best joke I ever heard.

JIM. *(Choking with mirth)* It beats a circus. *(And now these two venerable spirits are so overcome with merriment that they literally hang on each other's necks, shaking with laughter.)*

FRED. *(After several ineffectual efforts to control himself)* When—when I think of the years I worked for that old rascal! Oh, ha-ha-ha-ha!

JIM. Me too, Fred. Ha-ha-ha! And think of it: you and me are the only death watch he's got.

FRED. Ain't it immense?

JIM. It's simply wonderful.

FRED. Say, Jim!

JIM. What?

FRED. You see that crowd of mourners around the bed?

JIM. Yes.

FRED. *(Thoughtfully)* Well, the old man must have been kind of decent to his family or they wouldn't feel like that.

JIM. Oh, I don't know. Maybe they don't feel as bad as they look.

FRED. *(Brightening)* Maybe not.

JIM. Let's listen in and find out.

FRED. That's a kind of a mean trick.

JIM. Oh, what's the difference, just this once?

FRED. All right, come on! *(And the two little figures, standing side by side, fix their eyes on the spot where but a moment ago the sleepy* HENRY *was respectably lamenting. And now, incredibly enough, out of the darkness a voice:* HENRY'S *voice beyond a doubt, but slow and mechanical of utterance, as if*

HENRY *slept and dreamed aloud, and muffled, as if remote.)*

HENRY'S VOICE. So nothing but a miracle can save him. *(A faint sigh of unmistakable relief.)* Thank God the age of miracles is past.

JIM. *(Turning his head, chuckling)* Well, there's one heir that don't feel so bad.

FRED. Let's try another. *(They gaze attentively again.)*

THE NURSE'S VOICE. *(Slow, mechanical, distant)* I wish somebody'd take me to a show tomorrow night. I'll call up Harry; maybe he will. I wish I had a club sandwich and a bottle of beer. Tom Stone's the only decent one in the family. He's got a way with him. I wish I had his money. I wish—

FRED. Try the doctor. *(They move their heads a trifle.)*

THE DOCTOR'S VOICE. Five thousand or ten thousand—five thousand or ten thousand. Five thousand isn't enough. Ten thousand sounds a little steep. The family wouldn't kick about it; they'll be too tickled to care; but it might make some talk outside. Five thousand isn't enough. Well, split the difference; say seventy-five hundred. That sounds business-like and it ought to satisfy everybody. I'll get a new car and have the plumbing done over. Not bad—not bad. If he'd got well, I'd been lucky to get five hundred.

JIM. *(Explosively)* The darned old robber!

FRED. Hush! Try the next one. *(Again they shift their gaze a little.)*

ANTOINETTE'S VOICE. Madame Gai has the smartest styles. Charlotte's things have less style, but she fits me better. I'll have them both come in the morning. What a relief to get rid of Carrie and Tom. I wonder where I had better go for millinery. I wish Tony would stop fidgetting. I shall take her abroad immediately. I wish——

FRED. *(Disgustedly)* Well, that's enough of that.

JIM. *(Cheerfully)* Next!

TOM'S VOICE. I wonder how much the guv'nor has got. I hope there'll be plenty of cash. I wonder who the executor'll be. I wish I had a drink. It won't take me long to move out of this old ark. I wish I dared to light a cigarette in here. It'll be a blessing to get away from Carrie and Antoinette and Henry, the fathead. I wish I had a drink. That nurse isn't such a bad-looker. I wonder——

FRED. *(Turning away)* Faugh!

JIM. Sweet character, isn't he? Come on, don't quit. Let's finish it now. If there's one honest tear in the gang, let's find it.

TONY'S VOICE. I won't be able to go anywhere for a month. I don't see why. It's all rot. Nobody would ever recognize me, anyway, in the places I go. I'll have to call off the party tomorrow night. Gee, but I hate to. I wish I was married, so I could do what I please. Nasty old Carrie, the old cat! I'll show her where to head in now. I wish——

JIM. That must be his granddaughter.

FRED. *(Grimly)* Yes, I suppose so. Well, there's nobody left now but the sister.

JIM. Let's finish the job.

CARRIE'S VOICE. I'll get the house. He couldn't do less than that. I suppose the services'll be in the First Baptist Church. I'll wear my old black dress; it'll do nicely. If I get the house it won't take me long to show the rest of them the door. Tom is making eyes at that hussy of a nurse. I expect she's no better than he is. Well, if I get the house—— *(*FRED *turns away, shaking his head.)*

JIM. Well, are you satisfied?

FRED. Fine lot of mourners, eh? Say, wouldn't it be a joke on them if—— *(He breaks off to chuckle delightedly to himself.)*

JIM. *(Ecstatically)* Fred, you just naturally took those words out of my own mouth. *(He fairly chortles with glee.)* Say, doggone, wouldn't it be immense?

FRED. *(Holding his sides)* I can't remember when I've laughed like this. Oh, ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!

(And so absorbed are these two mischievous spirits in their most unspiritual mirth that they fail to observe the approach of CALEB STONE *himself. For a moment ago, close beside the spot where his bed was last seen,* CALEB *has suddenly appeared. Wizened, scrawny, sharp-featured, quite bald except for a thin fringe of snow-white hair, dressed in an ill-fitting black frock coat and baggy trousers,* CALEB, *barring a slightly bewildered expression, might just have risen from his office chair.)*

CALEB. *(Sharply)* Well?

(The culprits fall back like apprehended school-boys, and try to control their mirth, which breaks out now and then in snickers.)

CALEB. *(Regarding them sternly)* What do you mean by such conduct? *(They nudge each other, but neither speaks, and gradually they pull tolerably straight faces.)* Now, then, what are you doing here? What do you want? *(They shuffle their feet and bow their heads to conceal their delight.)* Come, come, out with it! My time is valuable. What do you want?

FRED. *(With a great effort to appear natural)* I guess you don't remember me, Mr. Stone?

CALEB. *(Snappishly)* No, I don't.

FRED. I used to work for you. I kept the E to G ledgers for almost twenty years.

CALEB. Well, I don't need any more bookkeepers now. Business is bad. Anyway, you're too old—much too old.

FRED. *(Grimly)* Yes, I remember, that's what you told me when you let me go.

CALEB. *(With a sharp cackle which serves him for a laugh)* Well, you ain't got any younger since, have you? *(With a gesture of dismissal he turns toward* JIM.) What do you want?

JIM. *(Stuttering under valiant efforts at poise)* I used to work for you, too, Mr. Stone. I kept the H. to K. ledgers.

CALEB. I seem to remember you. *(There is something about this incomplete recollection that disturbs him.)*

JIM. I kept your private ledger, too, for a spell.

CALEB. *(Mentally reviewing the past)* Humph! *(The thing eludes him and he makes an effort to dismiss it.)* Well, you're too old to keep books now,—too old. *(He turns away abruptly. Memory fills the gap. He pauses and turns back. His tone is less sharp and just a bit uncomfortable.)* Do you know, I—er—I had an idea you were dead.

JIM. I am dead.

CALEB. *(Doubting his ears)* What? What's that?

JIM. I've been dead for eighteen years.

CALEB. *(Furiously)* What do you mean by such talk as that?

JIM. *(With a broad grin)* I'm dead, he's dead, and you're dead, too.

CALEB. *(Beginning to be uneasy)* How—how dare you play such games with me?

FRED. *(Hugging himself rapturously)* Bellow away, Caleb Stone, but all the same, you're dead—dead as a doornail.

JIM. Dead as a smoked herring.

CALEB. *(Choking with rage, but retreating with-*

furtive glances to either side) Why—why—infernal —impudence——

JIM. *(Pointing)* Look over there.

(CALEB *turns his head and reels back with an exclamation of terror, having presumably confronted the spectacle of his own remains in his own bed. He rubs his eyes and looks again and the teeth chatter in his head.)*

FRED. Now, then, you see for yourself, you're absolutely dead.

CALEB. *(As well as his chattering teeth permit)* No, no! No!—Dream—dreaming—nightmare——

JIM. *(Disgustedly)* Don't that beat the Dutch! If he isn't the hard-headed old party!

CALEB. *(Has pinched his arm and is staring at it in stupefaction)* I—I don't feel anything.

FRED. Well, gosh-a-mighty, man, what do you expect? Can't you understand? You're dead.

CALEB. *(Wailing)* But I don't understand it. I don't like it.

JIM. *(Crossly)* What's wrong with it?

CALEB. It's not my idea at all. I wasn't brought up to expect anything like this. I'm a Baptist.

FRED. Shucks, don't let that worry you. Everybody gets fooled, Baptists and all.

JIM. Well, are you ready to admit now that you're dead?

CALEB. *(Glancing quickly over his shoulder—faintly)* I—I suppose I must be. *(He collapses weakly into an invisible chair and groans.)* Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! *(The two old spirits take advantage of the opportunity to exchange ecstatic glances, and while* FRED *hugs himself with glee,* JIM *executes a noiseless jig step.)*

CALEB. *(Struck with a new idea—suspiciously)* I don't see any angels.

JIM. You don't? You're looking at a pair of first-raters right now.

CALEB. *(Horrified)* Are you angels?

FRED. *(Sternly)* Certainly we're angels.

CALEB. *(Snivelling)* Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! What a disappointment! Oh, dear!

JIM. *(Imitating* CALEB'S *natural tone as closely as he can)* Now look here, Caleb Stone, we've had about enough of this. Our time is valuable. (CALEB *looks up fearfully.)* The point is: now that you're here, what are you going to do?

CALEB. Oh, dear! I don't know!

FRED. Where's your death watch?

CALEB. *(Blankly)* Death watch? Death watch? I don't know what you mean.

FRED. A death watch is some of your friends that wait for you over here, and take you around, and introduce you, and make you at home till you get used to it: that's a death watch. Everybody has one, every decent person. Where's yours?

CALEB. *(Miserably)* I—I don't know.

JIM. Well, we know, Caleb Stone: you haven't got any death watch; you haven't got a friend in the whole blame universe. You've never done a kind act to anyone, not even a dog. If you had, he'd be here.

CALEB. *(Moaning)* Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, dear!

JIM. It's no good snivelling, Caleb Stone. The question is: what are you going to do about it?

CALEB. *(Tremulously)* Can't—can't you gentlemen be my death watch?

JIM. *(Outraged)* Us! We be your death watch! Why, doggone it, man, what are you thinking of? We used to work for you.

CALEB. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! What will become of me?

FRED. Why, you'll just wander up and down the

black space alone for ages. Nobody'll speak to you or have anything to do with you. You'll be alone, always alone.

CALEB. *(Cringing with terror)* Oh, oh, oh! Oh, no, not that! Help me! Save me! Isn't there anything I can do? Anything?

JIM. There might be just one thing,—if it ain't too late.

CALEB. What? Oh, please tell me what! I'll do anything,—anything.

JIM. You might,—mind you, I don't say you can,—but you might go back.

CALEB. *(Stupidly)* Back? Back to life?

JIM. What do you think, Fred? Is there a chance for him?

FRED. Well, it has been done.

CALEB. *(Dancing with eagerness)* How? How? Tell me how. Oh, quickly, tell me how!

FRED. Just think yourself alive.

CALEB. Think? Think myself alive? I don't understand. I don't know what you mean.

JIM. *(Impatiently)* Think, man, think! Use your nut. Life itself is only an idea.

CALEB. Yes, yes, I see; I will. I am thinking—thinking—thin—— *(He is scuttling backward while he speaks. His last word seems to melt into the air, and the pale light surrounding him goes out.)*

FRED. Well, goshamighty, Jim, I actually believe he's done it! *(He chuckles delightedly.)*

JIM. Ain't it immense? *(Arm in arm they start to stroll away.)*

FRED. Do you think it will do him any good?

JIM. *(Contemptuously)* Naw, not him. He'll always believe he dreamed it. *(And with the last word they and their light have vanished.)*

(And here again is CALEB'S *bed, and* CALEB'S *cunning bedside lights just as we left them. The*

mourners seem hardly to have moved. ANTOINETTE *is sobbing with redoubled fury;* CARRIE *is sniffling with all her might;* HENRY *and* TOM *and* TONY *are as we left them. The* DOCTOR, *medicine case in hand, is proceeding on tiptoe toward the door. The* NURSE *is about to perform her last professional rite and draw the sheet across the dead man's face. As she bends over to this task, suddenly she starts back with a smothered cry.)*

NURSE. Doctor! Doctor! *(The* DOCTOR *hurries back to her and together they bend over the bed. The mourners' lamentations are stilled and they huddle closer to the bed. After a few moments the* DOCTOR *straightens up. His face wears an expression of complete bewilderment.)*

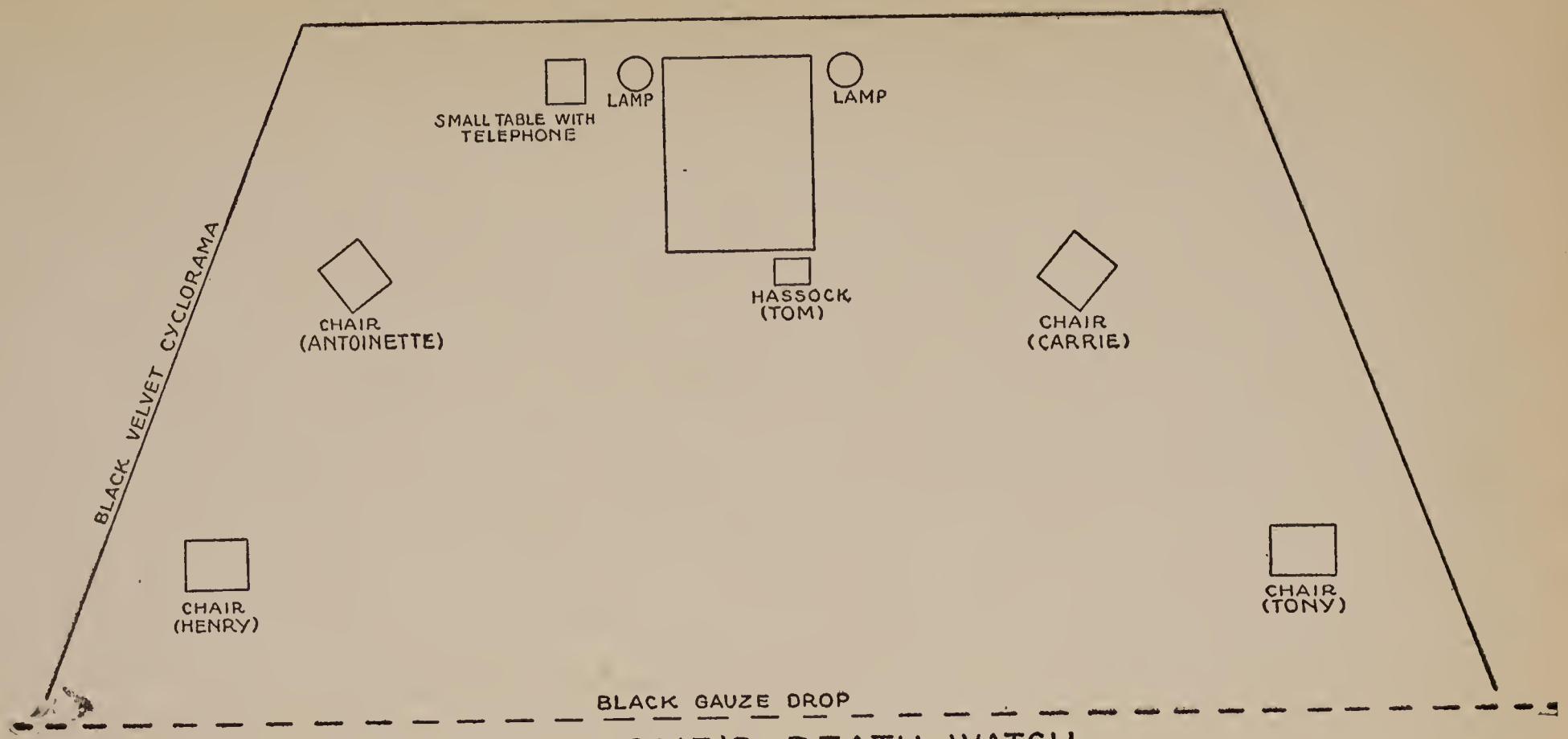
DOCTOR. I—I don't understand it. His—his pulse is normal.

THE MOURNERS. *(In chorus)* What?

DOCTOR. *(Recovering his professional demeanor)* There has been a miracle.

(A deep sigh proceeds from the mourners as a whole, but its precise quality would be difficult to analyze.)

CURTAIN



CALEB STONE'S DEATH WATCH

SCENE DESIGN

THE CASTLE OF MR. SIMPSON

Farce. 1 act. By John Kirkpatrick. 4 males, 4 females. Interior. Modern costumes. 30 minutes.

"An Englishman's home is his castle"—so runs the quotation. But if the Englishman happens to be an American and if he has three daughters, it's just too bad. Lil undertakes to have her father spend a quiet evening at the house. She makes elaborate plans to get rid of her sister's boy-friends and then discovers a boy-friend for herself. This is a highly amusing comedy which cannot be too highly recommended to amateur producing units searching for a sure-fire farce.

(Royalty, $5.00.) Price, 35 cents.

STATUE OF LIBERTY

Comedy. 1 act. By John Kirkpatrick. 2 males, 6 females. Interior. Modern costumes. 35 minutes.

Julie discovers that nobody is really free. Returning from abroad where she has obtained a divorce she drinks a toast to the Statue of Liberty. But before the boat docks she has a mass of responsibilities—a friend's house to take care of, a cousin's child to look after, two foreign servants whom she didn't want and a St. Bernard dog she won at a lottery and can't get rid of. With so much on her hands, Julie decides that she might as well have a husband too.

(Royalty, $5.00.) Price, 35 cents.

IN HEAVEN AND EARTH

Drama. 1 act. By Dennis Plimmer. 8 males, 2 females (extras). Interior, exterior. Modern costumes. 25 minutes.

Ray Maynard is the editor of his college newspaper which he has conducted along pacifist principles when a war breaks out. All Ray's college friends, once fellow pacifists, desert him under pressure of public opinion, including even Norma, the girl he loves. Ray continues his peace work and is rewarded by political imprisonment. Eventually, he is released. He returns alone at night to his college, and there the ghosts of his dead comrades return to tell him he was right, and to beg him to continue his crusade for peace.

(Royalty, $5.00.) Price, 35 cents.

GOODNIGHT, PLEASE!

Comedy. 1 act. By Peter Dagget. 4 males, 3 females. Interior. Modern costumes. 30 minutes.

Merideth Whitehouse has now become president of the First National Bank and is in a position to indulge a fantastic fancy —to stay in bed for a week. It is the afternoon of the third day and we discover that this unconventional vacation is driving his entire household crazy. His wife, his daughter, his valet, his brother-in-law, his vice-president and his cook all storm into the bedroom in their attempts to make him see that this is a ridiculous performance for a grown man. Finally, they team up in a last frantic effort, but Merideth is saved for the week.

(Royalty, $5.00.) Price, 35 cents.

KISS THE STAR

Comedy. 1 act. By Josephine Victor and Scott Farnworth. 4 males, 2 females. Interior. Modern costumes. 25 minutes.

Ken and Bert run The Star, a college paper in which they have conducted a matching contest to raise money to produce the annual campus follies, *Kiss The Star*. The prize is a date with Mary, Ken's girl who is tentatively scheduled for the lead in *Kiss The Star,* and one hundred and fifty dollars. Hiram Hitcherpuss of Cheyenne, Wyoming, is announced as the winner after Bert and Ken have assured themselves that there is no such person. But suddenly Hiram arrives and the fun begins! Especially recommended for high schools and groups of young people.

(Royalty, $5.00.) Price, 35 cents.

FRIGHT

Drama. 1 act. By James Reach. 3 males, 2 females. Interior. Modern costumes. 35 minutes.

John Fairbride, a well-to-do business man, has ample reason to believe his life is in danger. Finally, John receives this note: "By twelve o'clock tonight you will be dead." John, bewildered, his nerves at the breaking point from the long strain, becomes a victim of his imagination. To each of his family and friends his fancy can ascribe some reason for wanting him dead. Then, just at the stroke of twelve, the murderer strikes. A clever twist, and the ends of Justice are served.

(Royalty, $5.00.) Price, 35 cents.

THE SIGN OF THE FOUR

Mystery. 1 act. By John Hershey. From the story of the same name by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. 6 males. Interiors. Costumes, 1888. 35 minutes.

The technique used in this play utilizes for the first time on the stage the newer methods of radio. The story, of course, recounts the adventures that befell certain British officers when they attempted to steal the famous Agra treasure of India, and the inevitable doom that overtook them—with a dash of romance added. This play, simple to produce, should have a universal audience appeal.

(Royalty, $5.00.) Price, 35 cents.

HIS FIRST DATE

Comedy. 1 act. By James Reach. 2 males, 4 females. Interior. Modern costumes. 30 minutes.

Henry is wild, mischievous, fond of boyish pranks, but his mother takes comfort from the knowledge that he's not involved in affairs with the opposite sex. Then the blow falls: Loraine Lotus, Hollywood siren with a not-too-savory reputation comes to town and Henry succumbs. She strings along for the publicity value of the Tippet name, is invited by Henry to the house. Henry's father, determined to put an end to the affair in his masterly way, is dismayed to discover that Loraine Lotus is a girl he knew very well indeed years ago in his own wild-oats days.

(Royalty, $5.00.) Price, 35 cents.

A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY

Comedy. 1 act. By Hilda Manning. 3 males, 3 females. Interior. Modern costumes. 30 minutes.

Donnie Hoofle, at sixteen, is about to have his first important "date." Although only a high-school junior, he has secured two tickets for the college's Freshman Hop, and has invited Bertitia Butt. Joo-Joo Miller, fifteen and enamored of Donnie, feels all is lost when he tells her he couldn't think of taking a mere infant of her years to an important function like the hop. Tragedy rears its ugly head when Donnie discovers that Bertitia is the college's perennial wall-flower. An excellent, shrewdly contrived play for young amateurs.

(Royalty, $5.00.) Price, 35 cents.

THEY'RE NONE OF THEM PERFECT

Comedy. 1 act. By Sophie Kerr. 6 females, 1 extra. Interior. Modern costumes. 30 minutes.

Amanda Bartlett, a successful young business woman, is giving a dinner party to five of her married women friends to announce her coming marriage. One of the women's husbands is always late to meals; one is very untidy; one is determined to talk French in public although he speaks abominably. The last confession is of a husband who is "nasty neat." Amanda maintains that her fiancé is perfect, but at the very end her friends discover that he is not quite so perfect after all. Very light and amusing and based on small but universal masculine foibles.

(Royalty, $5.00.) Price, 35 cents.

ROMANCE IS A RACKET

Farce-comedy. 1 act. By John Kilpatrick. 3 males, 4 females. Interior. Modern costumes.

Miss Edith and her "little party of ladies," with Wallie looking after the luggage and passports, find themselves in a lonely Italian inn where an accommodating fellow-tourist undertakes to provide excitement by invoking the aid of imaginary bandits. As the bandits are non-existent Wallie manages to rout them but heroism goes to his head. And just when he is swaggering about the place like all the Three Musketeers at once—Bang! Poor Wallie finds there are worse things than bandits.

(Royalty, $5.00.) Price, 50 cents.

BREAD

Drama. 1 act. By Fred Eastman. 2 males, 4 females. Interior. Modern costumes. 30 minutes.

"I heartily endorse it and recommend it to all Farm Bureau Schools and Churches interested in the struggle of the American farmer." M. S. Winder, Secretary, American Farm Bureau Federation. *Bread,* written by Professor Fred Eastman, of the Chicago Theological Seminary, is a human play based upon the economic and personal problems of American farming people. Though it is powerful as a plea for help, it is also a play which will be used by amateurs no matter what their interests or pursuits.

(Royalty, $5.00.) Price, 30 cents. Also in volume *Plays of American Life,* $2.50.

SPARKIN'

Comedy. 1 act. By E. P. Conkle. 1 male, 3 females. Interior. Modern costumes. 25 minutes.

This is a delightful little comedy of small-town Nebraska people and has to do with a timid young man who goes courting, but is unable to come to the point until Granny teaches him how to become a man. The play acts capitally.

(Royalty, $5.00.) In *Crick Bottom Plays,* $1.50, and separately, 35 cents.

CABBAGES

Comedy. 1 act. By Edward Staadt. 3 males, 4 females. Interior. Modern costumes. 1 hour.

A striking character study of modern American life. There is a very interesting plot, and a dramatic situation which renders the play particularly attractive for amateur production. A *Playshop Plays* title.

(Royalty, $5.00.) Price, 50 cents.

TWO CROOKS AND A LADY

Drama. 1 act. By Eugene Pillot. 3 males, 3 females. Interior. Modern costumes. 30 minutes.

This is one of the most popular one-act plays. For some years it has been one of the standbys of Little Theaters, schools and colleges. It is an exceptionally clever little drama. It is not at all difficult to act or produce.

(Royalty, $10.00.) Price, 30 cents.

THE BISHOP'S CANDLESTICKS

Drama. 1 act. By Norman McKinnel. 3 males, 2 females. Interior. Costumes, French 1800. 30 minutes.

This is a dramatization of an incident in *Les Miserables.* The Convict breaks into the Bishop's house, and is clothed and warmed. The benevolence of the Bishop somewhat softens the Convict, but when he sees the silver candlesticks that would provide him with means of escape, he steals them—is captured and brought back. He expects to go back to jail, but the Bishop informs the police that they are a gift. He then departs, to start life over again.

(Royalty, $5.00.) Price, 30 cents.